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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: GENC PARTY DREAMS BIG

(U) Classified by Acting Political Counselor Nicholas S.
Kass. Reason: 1.5 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) Motorola deadbeat Cem Uzan's Genc (Young) Party Ankara provincial chairman Sule Nazlioglu expounded in a forceful manner on her party's political goals in an April 16 meeting with poloffs in Kizilcahamam sub-province. Surrounded by a coterie of dapper young men who seemed out of place in a land of crushed-shoe small-town conservatism, Nazlioglu wagged her finger and raised her voice to a near screech while offering the following:

-- Genc doesn't want to be labeled as a party with a particular ideology. "As our Chairman says, 'if people want to call us fascists, then we are fascists; if people want to call us communists, then we are communists; if they call us capitalists, we're capitalists.'"

-- In stark contrast to the rampant anti-Americanism that pervades all of Cem Uzan's media outlets and Genc Party ads, Nazlioglu claimed the party's commitment to Turkey's good relations with U.S. She did not elaborate when pressed.

-- Genc was formed largely as a reaction against the fecklessness of past Turkish administrations.

-- Gesturing to her well-heeled colleagues, she asserted that Genc members are highly educated and come from a variety of political backgrounds. Nazlioglu, for example, is a former activist on the left. Former members of center-right DYP and ultranationalist MHP were also present.

-- Genc is confident it can capitalize on its showing in the national elections, in which it captured 7.5% of votes. "If we can get 7.5% in only two months (after the party was set up), then we should be able to win a majority the next time."

(Note: one Genc official claimed the party had become a case study for political science students at Bilkent University. We have heard on the street that Genc officials believe they are at well over 10 percent in the public opinion surveys. End note.)

Star Search

¶2. (C) While maintaining its sullen rhetoric and angry nationalist-corporatist pose, Genc is trying to acquire the patina of a legitimate party -- mostly by recruiting legit faces as poster boys to woo more mainstream voters. Longtime Embassy contacts Adil Asirim (formerly of ANAP) and Ufuk Soylemez (erstwhile DYP) recently joined Genc. Asirim and Soylemez had challenged for the ANAP and DYP chairmanships; the publicity garnered from their failed bids generated some buzz as they crossed over to the Uzan family.

¶3. (C) A variety of Congen Istanbul (septel) and Embassy Pol section contacts tell us that Genc is making a serious effort to recruit Istanbul Mayor Ali Mufit Gurtuna. According to press reports, Ankara Mayor Melih Gokcek is also considering joining the Uzans. However, denying the Genc story to us April 17, Gokcek's chief of staff Murat Dogru claimed instead that the ruling AK Party, not Genc, had asked Gokcek to join. Gokcek's political enemies, he said (note: and there are many in AK. End note) had planted the Genc story to discredit him. Dogru added that Gokcek is in no hurry to sign on with AK in any event -- given the party's "unsuccessful government up to now."

Comment: Machine-Building

14. (C) Contacts from across the political spectrum have expressed concern that, with local elections mandatory by April 2004, Genc is increasingly seen as an emerging threat to both AK and the Establishmentarian CHP -- which many deride as a weak and vulnerable opposition party. While Genc has some media and other financial advantages stemming from the Uzan fortune, the party itself still has some work to do.

The Istanbul and Ankara mayoralties would be huge prizes, and would certainly strengthen the infrastructure of a political machine still in its organizational infancy.

PEARSON